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FLOOR DEBATE

March 14, 2001 LB 692

by Senator Byars and others. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 16 of this year, at that time referred to the Health and Human Services Committee for public hearing, advanced to General File. I do have committee amendments, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Byars, you're recognized to open on LB 692.

SENATOR BYARS: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor. Members, LB 692, as you will hear the committee amendments, takes on a...will certainly still retain the basic language and the intent of LB 692 relative to respite funding. But LB 692 is going to also include many chronically underfunded public health issues in the state of Nebraska. So what I'm trying to explain to you is that LB 692 will not stay LB 692, but will be the vehicle for how we as a public policymaking group determine that we are going to allocate distribution of the tobacco settlement dollars. I'd like to give you a little bit of background on how we arrived at the point that we're at today. And I'm going to take about half of my opening to explain that to you, and then I'm going to give the balance of my opening time to Senator Jensen who will background you on the Nebraska Health Care Funding Act, the history of that act, the legislative history, what our fund balance is and expected receipts are so you know from a detailed standpoint where we're coming from to fund what we're going to ask you to enact today. We had eight bills that were introduced at the beginning of the session to deal with funding from the...to get funding from the Nebraska Health Care Tobacco Settlement Fund. As those bills were referenced by the Reference Committee, it was fairly apparent that because of the sizable amount of funding issues in these bills plus the health, the public health content that it would be an unusual but a logical step to jointly reference these bills rather than referencing them where they typically would have gone to Health and Human Services. So with the agreement of the Chairs, Senator Wehrhein and Senator Jensen, Chairs of Appropriations and Health and Human Services, we agreed as a referencing committee to reference these eight bills to a joint committee. The joint committee to act as a committee of the whole, to hear testimony on the bills, to do whatever negotiations necessary to